ALEXANDER HAMILTON
THE MAN WHO MADE MODERN AMERICA

A Documentary Companion to the Exhibition at the New York Historical Society
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INTRODUCTION

Alexander Hamilton lives in our memory because he died in a lurid duel with Vice President Aaron Burr, and because we carry his face in our wallets, on the ten dollar bill. But Hamilton’s packed and varied career was impressive enough for Mount Rushmore. More than any other Founder, he foresaw the America we now live in. All the Founders had high ideals, but Hamilton—inquisitive, visionary, combative and urbane—shaped the institutions that would make those ideals come to life. The new nation’s legal, economic and political systems all bore Hamilton’s mark.

Hamilton was born on the Caribbean island of Nevis, probably in 1757, and raised on St. Croix. Those early years marked him. The shame of his birth, to unmarried parents, fueled a lifelong concern with his family’s honor. His first job as the bookkeeper in a New York-based merchant house in St. Croix taught him the workings of international commerce from the bottom up.

In 1773, Hamilton was sent to New York to be educated. His identity as an immigrant shaped his identity as an American. When native-born Americans of the period spoke of their “country,” they usually meant their home state; Hamilton’s loyalty was only and always to the United States. Sometimes the short-sighted particularism of his compatriots drove him to despair, but Hamilton always overcame it, and worked for the unity, strength and self-respect of his adopted nation.

Hamilton arrived in New York during a dramatic time. Shortly after he began his studies at King’s College (now Columbia University), Britain and its colonies went to war. Hamilton left school to fight. His experience in the American Revolution—for instance as the captain of a New York artillery company, then as a colonel on George Washington’s staff—was an education in military and political affairs.

Hamilton believed ardentlly in the Revolutionary cause, but he could also face reality, and much of it was dark. Working for the Commander in Chief plunged him into the country’s financial and constitutional problems. Congress, in its original form, lacked the power to tax; funding the war was thus a constant struggle. Hamilton chafed at the inefficiencies and lack of coordination. In a 1780 letter to a French diplomatic secretary, he complains that America is constantly mired in a “system of feebleness and temporary expedients.”

At the Constitutional Convention seven years later, Hamilton and the other Framers undertook to repair the systemic feebleness that Hamilton had witnessed during the war. Hamilton and his fellow Federalists argued passionately for a stronger, more centralized government. The document that the delegates to the Convention produced is an elaborate mechanism, but the change in the opening words of the Preamble, from the first draft to the final version, symbolizes its nationalizing and energizing tendencies:
“We the People of the United States.” That prophetic language was the handiwork of Gouverneur Morris, delegate from Pennsylvania. But it reflected the hopes and the ideas of Morris’s friend Hamilton, who would spend the rest of his career implementing them.

In his private affairs, as in his public ones, Hamilton joined the new nation’s elite. In December 1780, he had married Elizabeth Schuyler, daughter of General Philip Schuyler and one of the most eligible young women in New York. His October 1780 love letter to her glows with emotion. He loves his “nut-brown maid,” and he desires her. But he also says—jestingly?—that love makes him “puny.” These combustible passions would give him, and Betsey, their share of grief.

In 1788, the Constitution was ratified, in part because of Hamilton’s intense public efforts on its behalf in The Federalist Papers, published in eighty-five installments in New York newspapers between October 1787 and May 1788. Hamilton conceived of the project and wrote nearly two-thirds of the essays; John Jay and James Madison wrote the rest. In 1789, Washington became the nation’s first President and chose Hamilton, his former aide, as Treasury Secretary. No small collection of Hamiltoniana can do more than hint at Hamilton’s achievements in this office. Hamilton more than any other Founder kept the weak new nation from bankruptcy; he and Washington kept it out of war; he and his admirer John Marshall kept it from capricious justice. If he had failed, we might use the phrase “maple republics” instead of “banana republics,” for the United States would have been the first one.

No politician achieves everything he wants—especially not a politician as creative and headstrong as Hamilton. In his December 1800 letter to Congressman Harrison Gray Otis, Hamilton performs the irksome task of choosing one enemy, Thomas Jefferson, over another, Aaron Burr, in that year’s deadlock presidential election. This letter, one of a stream he produced that winter, is noteworthy for its passing analysis of psychology: “No compact, that [Burr] should make with any passion in his breast except Ambition, could be relied upon by himself.” All the Founders were ambitious. But they all moderated (or made compacts with) their ambition: all of them save Aaron Burr. Hence Hamilton reluctantly preferred Jefferson.

Burr finally resented this, and many other slights. The gentlemen corresponded, and agreed to do what gentlemen did when honor was at stake. The Vice President and the former Treasury Secretary met on July 11, 1804 at Weehawken, New Jersey. Hamilton’s bullet hit the branch of a cedar tree. Burr’s pierced Hamilton’s abdomen. The hectic note of Betsey’s sister Angelica Church, dashed off the morning her brother-in-law (and perhaps lover) was shot, expresses the hope that Hamilton would recover, but he died the next day. The description of his funeral procession was printed in the New-York Evening Post, the newspaper he founded.

Alexander Hamilton’s death was two centuries ago. The issues he lived with—war and peace; law and disorder; debt and prosperity; passion and ambition—are the eternal stuff of politics.

—RICHARD BROOKHISER
**IMMIGRATION**

**Hamilton’s St. Croix:**

**The Sugar Economy**

Born on Nevis and raised on St. Croix, Alexander Hamilton received his formative experience in the midst of a slave economy. The slave system of the sugar plantations, which created such wealth, blighted the island, as noted by the colonial poet Philip Freneau in these stanzas from a poem written in the 1770s, “The Beauties of Santa Cruz.” Hamilton, too, recognized the paradox and would later be a leader in the anti-slavery movement in the United States.

From “The Beauties of Santa Cruz”

On yonder steepy hill, fresh harvests rise,
Where the dark tribe from Afric’s sun-burnt plain
Oft o’er the ocean turn their wishful eyes
To isles remote high looming o’er the main.

See yonder slave that slowly bends this way,
With years, and pain, and ceaseless toil opprest,
Though no complaining words his woes betray,
The eye dejected proves the heart distrest.

But thou, who own’st this sugar-bearing soil,
To whom no good the great First Cause denies,
Let freeborn hands attend thy sultry toil,
And fairer harvests to thy view shall rise.

Slave leg chain, c. 1760 (Gilder Lehrman Collection); excerpt from “The Beauties of Santa Cruz” from The Poems of Philip Freneau: Written Chiefly During the Late War (Philadelphia: Francis Bailey, 1786); and a 1790s sugar bowl belonging to the Schuylers, the family of Hamilton’s wife, Elizabeth. (New-York Historical Society)

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**IMMIGRATION**

**Hamilton’s New York:**

**A Vista of the City, c. 1756–57**

This painting of New York from the late 1750s shows the city much as Alexander Hamilton would have found it when he emigrated from the Caribbean in 1773. As the only Founding Father who was himself an immigrant, Hamilton holds particular interest for modern Americans. While his talents and ambition were perfectly suited to the burgeoning energy of New York, he was able to envision the United States as one country in a way that his contemporaries, who had loyalties to their home states, perhaps could not.

A Southeast Prospect of the City of New York, by an unidentified artist, c. 1756-57. (New-York Historical Society)
In this excerpt from a letter to Robert Livingston, a fellow New Yorker and member of the New York Provincial Congress, Hamilton reports on the progress of the war. He defends General Washington's recent military decisions, explaining that what might seem like passivity is, in fact, excellent strategy.

...I know the comments that some people will make on our Fabian conduct.—It will be imputed either to cowardice or to weakness:—But the more discerning, I trust, will not find it difficult *to conceive that it proceeds from the truest policy, and is an argument neither of the one nor the other. The liberties of America are an infinite stake.—We should not play a desperate game for it or put it upon the issue of a single cast of the die.—The loss of one general engagement may effectually ruin us, and it would certainly be folly to hazard it, unless our resources for keeping up an army were at an end, and some decisive blow was absolutely necessary; or unless our strength was so great as to give certainty of success.—Neither is the case:—America can in all probability maintain its army for years, and our numbers such as would give a reasonable hope of success are not such as should make us entirely sanguine.—A third consideration did it exist might make it expedient to risk such an event — the prospect of very great reinforcements to the enemy; but every appearance contradicts this, and affords all reason to believe, they will get very inconsiderable accessions of strength this campaign.—All the European maritime powers, are interested for the defeat of the British arms in America, and will never assist them.—A small part of Germany is disposed to make a market of its troops, and even this seems not over-fond of being drained any further. Many springs may be put in motion even to put a stop to this. The King of Prussia may perhaps without much difficulty be engaged to espouse views unfriendly to the Court of Britain, and a nod of his would be sufficient to prevent all future German succours.—He as well as most other powers of Europe feels the necessity of Commerce and a large maritime force to be generally respectable, and at the end of the summer the disparity between us will be infinitely great, and facilitate any exertions that may be made to settle the business with them. Their affairs will be growing worse — our’s better:—so that delay will ruin them.—It will serve to perplex and fret them, and precipitate them into measures, that we can turn to good account.—Our business then is to avoid a General engagement and waste the enemy away by constantly goading their sides, in a desultory teasing way. ...
“The want of money makes us want every thing else”:
A Letter from Colonel Alexander Hamilton, with the Continental Army in New Jersey, to François, the Marquis de Barbé-Marbois, in Philadelphia
October 12, 1780

In his letter to a French diplomat, Hamilton could not refute his ally’s gloomy view of the war. By October 1780, Hamilton was discouraged by the apparent apathy of the American people and the ineffectuality of their elected representatives, as well as by the recent discovery of Benedict Arnold’s treachery.

In my absence from Camp, the Commissary of prisoners has no doubt informed you, that your Brothers were not at New York. I am sorry you were so long kept in suspense about an explanation which without a determined disposition to blunder ought to have been long since obtained.

I find, my Dear Sir, on the experiment in several ways, that I cannot regularly procure the New York papers in exchange for those of Philadelphia. The only certain mode would be to send a weekly flag for the purpose, but the General apprehensive of popular jealousies, thinks it would be inconvenient.—I shall with pleasure continue to forward them as often as they come into my hands; but I will not give you the trouble of sending regularly those of Philadelphia, as the object you have in view cannot be answered by it.

We are again told of an embarkation on the point of sailing three days since. We have been so often deceived that we are diffident of accounts of this kind; but the present come with a degree of emphasis, that intitle them to attention. No particulars. The want of money makes us want every thing else — even intelligence.

I have received since my return several letters from you. I agree with you my Dear Sir that while we call to our friends for help, we ought to help ourselves; and I am mortified that we seem not to be in a disposition to do it. The late deliberations on our military affairs prove that we have not profitted by experience; — still the same system of feebleness and temporary expedients. Misfortune may at last enlighten us, but it may come too late to do anything more than to make our “darkness visible” and discover to us “sights of woe.” I confess I view our affairs in a gloomy light. We hear there is to be a Congress of the neutral powers to meet at the Hague this winter to mediate a peace. God send it — we want one.

Permit me to repeat to you the assurances of my attachment.

A Hamilton

October 12th. 80

*Throughout the book, bold type indicates text that appears in the picture of the document at right.
“To be thus monopolized, by a little nut-brown maid like you”: A Love Letter from Alexander Hamilton to Elizabeth Schuyler
October 6, 1780

In this intimate letter to Elizabeth Schuyler, Hamilton casts himself as both a lover and a statesman. His charm succeeded and the two were married on December 14, 1780 at Betsey’s family home near Albany, New York.

I have told you, and I told you truly that I love you too much. You engross my thoughts too intirely to allow me to think of any thing else. You not only employ my mind all day; but you intrude upon my sleep. I meet you in every dream — and when I wake I cannot close my eyes again for ruminating on your sweetnesses. ’Tis a pretty story indeed that I am to be thus monopolized, by a little nut-brown maid like you — and from a statesman and a soldier metamorphosed into a puny lover. I believe in my soul you are an enchantress; but I have tried in vain, if not to break, at least, to weaken the charms — you maintain your empire in spite of all my efforts — and after every new one, I make to withdraw myself from my allegiance my partial heart still returns and clings to you with increased attachment.

To drop figure my lovely girl you become dearer to me every moment. I am more and more unhappy and impatient under the hard necessity that keeps me from you, and yet the prospect lengthens as I advance. Harrison has just received an account of the death of his father and will be obliged to go to Virginia. Meade’s affairs (as well as his love) compel him to go there also in a little time. There will then remain too few in the family to make it possible for me to leave it ‘till Harrison’s return — but I have told him that I will not be delayed beyond November. I had hoped the middle would have given us to each other; but I now fear it will be the latter end. Though the period of our reunion in reality approaches it seems further off. Among other causes of uneasiness, I dread lest you should imagine, I yield too easily to the bars, that keep us asunder; but if you have such an idea you ought to banish it and reproach yourself with injustice. A spirit entering into bliss, heaven opening upon all its faculties, cannot long more ardently for the enjoyment, than I do my darling Betsey, to taste the heaven that awaits me in your bosom. Is my language too strong? it is a feeble picture of my feeling:— no words can tell you how much I love and how much I long — you will only know it when wrapt in each others arms we give and take those delicious caresses which love inspires and marriage sanctifies. . . .
“Regard, with Compassion, the Injustice done to . . . Slaves”:
The Principles of the New York Society
for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves
February 4, 1785

In 1785, Hamilton was one of thirty-two prominent New Yorkers who founded the New York Manumission Society. In this excerpt from the minutes of the second meeting on February 4, 1785, at which Hamilton was present and his friend John Jay was elected chairman, the Society sets forth its founding principles.

Principles. The benevolent Creator and Father of Men having given to them all, an equal Right to Life, Liberty and Property; no Sovereign Power, on Earth, can justly deprive them of either, but in Conformity to impartial Government and Laws to which they have expressly or tacitly consented—

Objects of the Society. It is our Duty, therefore, both as free Citizens and Christians, not only to regard, with Compassion, the Injustice done to those, among us, who are held as Slaves, but to endeavour, by lawful Ways and Means, to enable them to Share, equally with us, in that civil and religious Liberty with which an indulgent Providence has blessed these States; and to which these, our Brethren, are by Nature, as much entitled as ourselves.

Kidnapping The Violent Attempts lately made to seize, and export for Sale, several free Negroes who were peaceably following their respective Occupations, in this City, must excite the Indignation of every Friend to Humanity, and ought to receive exemplary Punishment.

Helpless Situation of the Negroes. The Hope of Impunity is, too often, an invincible temptation to Transgression; and as the helpless Condition of the Persons alluded to doubtless exposed them to the Outrage they experienced; so it is probable that the like Circumstances may again expose them and others to similar Violences.— Destitute of Friends and of knowledge; struggling with Poverty and; accustomed to Submission they are under great disadvantages in Asserting their Rights.—

Motives. These Considerations induce us to form ourselves into a Society to be Stiled

Name. A Society for promoting the Manumission of Slaves and protecting such of them as have been or may be Liberated.
Friday – 29. June –

Question of Representation –

Johnson – The two sides of the house reason in such a manner that we can never meet – those who contend for an equality of votes among the states, define a state to be a mere association of men, & then say these associations are equal – on the other hand those who contend for a Representation in proportion to numbers, define a state to be a District of Country with a certain number of Inhabitants, like a parish or County, and then say, these districts shd have an influence in proportion to their Number of Inhabitants – both reason justly from yr [their] premises – we must then compromise – let both parties be gratified – let one House or Branch be formed by one Rule & the other by another

Madison – We are vague in our Expressions – we speak of the sovereignty of the states – they are not sovereign – there is a regular gradation from the lowest Corporation, such as the incorporation of mechanicks to the most perf [perfect] sovereignty – The last is the true and only sovereignty – the states are not in that high degree sovereign – they are Corporations [with?] power of Bye Laws –

Hamilton

Men are naturally equal – societies or nations are equal when independent – it is as reasonable that states shd enter into a League departing from the Equality of states, as that men shd enter into the social Compact and agree to

(Continued on page 20)
On the following pages, at left is the first page of the working draft of the Constitution, submitted for debate at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in August 1787. On the right is the first page of the U.S. Constitution as it was finally published (this is Benjamin Franklin’s signed copy). Where the draft’s opening reflects the sense of the thirteen states as separate entities, the final version’s “We the People of the United States” invokes the Hamiltonian vision of a unified nation. A champion of the Constitution, Alexander Hamilton authored nearly two-thirds of the Federalist Papers of 1787-88, which are universally viewed as the factor that turned public opinion in favor of ratification.

(Continued from page 18)

depart from the natural Equality of man – this is done in every society – property goes into the Consideration, age, & minority are admitted – a man shall not be Elector or Elected, unless he is of a given Age, & possesses the adventitious circumstance of property – We propose that the people shd be represented in proportion to yr [their] Numbers, the people then will be free – the avenues to every office are equally open to every man; and the Laws are to be formed by a majority of the people – yet it is said the states will be destroyed & therefore the people will be slaves – The consequence is not true, the people are free, at the expense of a mere ideal & artificial being, . . .

“We the People of the States”: The Preamble to a Draft of the Constitution of the United States August 1787

“We the People of the United States”: The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States September 17, 1787

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“Transmit to the Comptroller of the Treasury all . . . documents respecting the public debt”: Hamilton’s Order
Issued from the Treasury Department
August 4, 1791

On the day of Hamilton’s letter, Congress passed a controversial bill Hamilton had supported as Secretary of the Treasury. It stipulated that the federal government would assume the debts the individual states had incurred during the Revolution. Hamilton argued that this was vital to the young nation’s economic health. Here, Hamilton writes about the procedures involved in implementing the legislation for the assumption of the debt.

Treasury Department
Augt. 4th 1791

Sir,

It is deemed conducive to the general order of the department that the respective Commissioners of loans should henceforth transmit to the Comptroller of the Treasury all such official statement returns and documents respecting the public debt as they have been or shall be directed to furnish, except the summary of the amount of each kind of stock standing upon their books which has been required to be forwarded upon the closing of them in each quarter preparatory to the payment of Interest, and which they will continue to address immediately to the Secretary of the Treasury. And it is also deemed advisable that they should correspond generally with the said Comptroller concerning whatever relates to the execution of their several offices. They will therefore govern themselves accordingly; and will conform to the instructions which they shall from time to time receive from that officer.

This general direction is of course subject to the exception of all such matters as shall hereafter be objects of special and direct communication from the Secretary of the Treasury.

In the course of past transactions respecting public business, considerable frauds and losses have resulted from the practice of signing papers with blanks to be afterwards filled up. It is confided that this practice will in no case obtain in any of the loan offices. No certificate or any other document which may bind the public is to be signed till after it shall have been filled up with whatever it is to contain.

I am, with consideration
Sir Your obedt Servant
Alexander Hamilton
"In a choice of Evils . . . Jefferson is in every view less dangerous than Burr": Alexander Hamilton on the Deadlocked Presidential Election
December 23, 1800

Hamilton’s letter to fellow Federalist Harrison Gray Otis, a congressman from Massachusetts, reveals the political havoc caused by the deadlocked presidential election of 1800. Republicans Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr were tied and the House of Representatives had to vote to break that tie. Hamilton with reluctance supported Jefferson over Burr, whom he regarded as much more dangerous. Burr never forgot that Hamilton had helped cost him the presidency.

... I lose no time in replying to your letter of the 17 — this day received.

My opinion, after mature reflection, that if Jefferson and Burr come with equal votes to the House of Representatives, the former ought to be preferred by the [struck: House of Representatives] Federalists. Mr. Jefferson is respectably known in Europe — Mr. Burr little and that little not advantageously for a President of the UStates.

Mr. Jefferson is a man of easy fortune — Mr. Burr, as I believe, a bankrupt beyond redemption, unless by some coup at the expense of the public, and his habits of expense are such that Wealth he must have at any rate. Mr. Jefferson is a man of fair character for probity. Very different ideas are entertained of Mr. Burr by his enemies.

. . . Mr. Jefferson, though too revolutionary in his notions, is yet a lover of liberty and will be desirous of something like orderly Government. Mr. Burr loves nothing but himself — thinks of nothing but his own aggrandisement — and will be content with nothing short of permanent power in his own hands.

This portrait is the result of long and attentive observation on a man with whom I am personally well — and in respect to whose character I have had peculiar opportunities of forming a correct judgment.

By no means, my Dear Sir, let the Federalists be responsible for his Elevation. In a choice of Evils let them take the least — Jefferson is in every view less dangerous than Burr.

But we ought still to seek some advantages from our situation. It may be adviseable to make it a ground of exploration with Mr. Jefferson or his confidential friends and the means of obtaining from him some assurances of his future conduct. The three essential points for us to secure is: 1 The continuance of the neutral plan bonafide towards the belligerent powers 2 The preservation of the present system of public credit 3 The maintenance & gradual increase of our navy. Other matters may be left to take their chance.

While I have my pen in hand, I will express some ideas to you about the Convention with France. . . .

POLITICS

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A Portrait of Alexander Hamilton  
by John Trumbull

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Politics

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Duel

Aaron Burr-Alexander Hamilton Correspondence  
Leading to the Duel of July 11, 1804

Wounded by Burr, the Vice President of the United States, in a duel on July 11, 1804, Hamilton died on the 12th and his death dominated the NEW-YORK EVENING POST in the days that followed. The Burr-Hamilton correspondence printed in the Post on July 16, 1804 served not only to demonstrate the escalation of tensions between the two men but to commemorate the loss of the great Federalist, who had founded the Post just three years earlier.

[From Letter No. 1 - Column 1]
“I send for your perusal a letter signed Charles D. Cooper. . . . You must perceive, Sir, the necessity of a prompt and unqualified acknowledgement or denial of the use of any expression which would warrant the assertions of Dr. Cooper.”
Aaron Burr to Alexander Hamilton, June 18, 1804

[From Letter No. 2 - Column 1]
“I could not without manifest impropriety make the avowal or disavowal which you seem to think necessary. . . . Tis evident that the phrase ‘still more despicable’ admits of infinite shades from very light to very dark. . . . Between gentlemen, despicable and more despicable are not worth the pains of distinction.”
Alexander Hamilton to Aaron Burr, June 20, 1804

[From Letter No. 3 - Column 2]
“Political opposition can never absolve gentlemen from the necessity of a rigid adherence to the laws of honor, and the rules of decorum. I neither claim such privilege nor indulge it in others.”
Aaron Burr to Alexander Hamilton, June 21, 1804

[From Letter No. 5 - Column 2]
“Your first letter, in a style too peremptory, made a demand, in my opinion, unprecedented and unwarrantable. My answer, pointing out the embarrassment, gave you an opportunity to take a less exceptionable course. You have not chosen to do it.”
Alexander Hamilton to Aaron Burr, June 22, 1804

Overleaf is page 5, with the masthead from page 1, of the NEW-YORK EVENING POST of July 16, 1804. (New-York Historical Society)
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*Note: The table continues with similar entries.*
“General Hamilton was this morning woun[den] by that wretch Burr”:
A Letter from Hamilton’s Sister-in-Law
Angelica Church to Her Brother Philip J. Schuyler
July 11, 1804

at Wm Bayards Grenwich
Wednesday Morn

My dear Brother

I have the painful task to inform you that General Hamilton was this morning woun[den] by that wretch Burr but we have every reason to hope that he will recover. May I advice that you repair immediately to my father, as perhaps he may wish to come down—my dear Sister bears with saintlike fortitude this affliction. The town is in consternation, and there exists only the expression of grief & Indignation.

Adieu my dear Brother remember me to Sally, ever yours   A Church

Angela Church’s letter to Philip J. Schuyler, July 11, 1804. (Gilder Lehrman Collection)
“During his last illness”:
The Physician’s Bill for Attending Hamilton’s Deathbed

Shot in the duel with Aaron Burr, Hamilton was rowed back across the Hudson from Weehawken, New Jersey, and taken into the home of William Bayard. There he was attended by his physician, Dr. David Hosack. The bill reprinted below was presented to Hamilton’s executors. It covered not only the expenses for treating Alexander Hamilton on his deathbed, but the existing account for the previous six months.

The Estate of General Hamilton
To D Hosack Dr

1804 To med and adv in January—February $37.50
March—May and June __________   $37.50
To attendance &c during his last illness __________   50
$ 87.50

Rec’d payment

New York Augt. 8th. 1805    D Hosack

Dr. Hosack’s bill for services to Alexander Hamilton. (New-York Historical Society)
“Alexander Hamilton . . . Murdered”:
The Coroner’s Report on the Cause of Death, 
August 11, 1804

The report on the opposite page shows the finding of the inquest into Hamilton’s death, officially entered on August 11, 1804. Because Hamilton’s body had been taken to the home of his brother-in-law John Church, in Robinson Street, to be prepared for burial, the coroner specifies his remarkable finding in relation to that address: “Alexander Hamilton Robertson St. Murdered.”

The report of the coroner, John Burger, on deaths in New York City from May 1 through August 27, 1804, detailing his expenses as well as his official findings. (New-York Historical Society)
DEATH

[The document and image described below appear on the back cover of this booklet.]

The Order of March for Hamilton’s Funeral
July 14, 1804
and
A Portrait of His Widow, Elizabeth Hamilton

On the back cover of this booklet is an excerpt from the New-York Evening Post of July 17, 1804, reporting on Alexander Hamilton’s funeral of July 14. Several thousand turned out. The number of mourners lining the streets was a measure of their recognition of how much Hamilton had done to shape New York City and the United States—an eerie parallel to the honor done Hamilton in the parade sixteen years earlier celebrating the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. Also on the back cover is a portrait of Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton in 1825, twenty-one years after Alexander Hamilton’s death, still depicted in her mourning costume. Betsey would survive her husband by a full fifty years, and she spent those decades assiduously working to preserve his reputation and build his legacy.

For more information about the exhibition Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Made Modern America and other educational programs of the New-York Historical Society and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, please contact us at:

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At left, an article about Alexander Hamilton’s funeral procession from the *New-York Evening Post* of July 17, 1804 (New-York Historical Society); above, a portrait of Elizabeth Hamilton during her long widowhood, 1825, by Henry Inman. (New-York Historical Society)